



GLOBAL RULES *for* SUSTAINABLE FARMING

A comparison of social and environmental safeguards for REDD+ and Principles & Criteria for Commodity Roundtables



Indian soy farmer
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Two parallel processes

hold the potential to considerably reduce tropical forest conversion to agriculture, the cause of 12-15% of the world's anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. First, agricultural commodity “roundtables” have established international social and environmental performance criteria for farmers, including restrictions on deforestation. Second, REDD+² is developing systems for compensating tropical nations or states/provinces that reduce their emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. The potential synergies between these processes are large. Farmers seeking roundtable certification are restricted by certification costs. REDD+ is restricted by weak carbon markets and difficulties engaging the farm sectors that are the main drivers of deforestation. The “RT-REDD+ Consortium” was created to help realize these synergies, linking farmers in need of funding to certify their farms with REDD+ programs that are striving to engage their farm sectors.

Beyond restrictions on deforestation, how do roundtables and REDD+ compare? The answer to this question is very important as we assess the inter-compatibility of the two processes and the potential of each to support a broader transition to sustainable farming and livestock production. Here, we review and compare the safeguards and guidelines established (or proposed) by 5 major global REDD+ processes and related standards and the principles and criteria established by the roundtables for 3 of the world's major commodity crops, soybean, palm oil, and sugar cane. This is not an exhaustive review; we compared the standards for 9 major categories of criteria within 3 themes, as follows: (1) **Governance:** Legal Compliance, Transparency, Conflict & Grievance Resolution; (2) **Social:** Free, Prior & Informed Consent (FPIC), Land rights, Labor Rights; (3) **Environmental:** Forests, Biodiversity, Soil & Water.

REDD+ initiatives are designed to help individual sovereign nations (and sometimes sub-national jurisdictions) develop programs to reduce net emissions related to (primarily) forest clearing and degradation. The accompanying safeguards—even if they are applicable at smaller scales (e.g., project level)—cannot dictate specific national (or sub-national) policy. Rather, the objective is to help shape policy (where it does not exist or needs to be modified) or to help in the interpretation of existing policies. The CCBA standard differs in that it is a certification standard and thus binding on those who aim to be certified under the CCBA. Similarly, the Roundtable certification standards are binding on the producers who seek certification, and they are more prescriptive than REDD+ initiatives in that they are dealing with individuals and firms within a single commodity's supply chain.

² REDD is the acronym for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, a mechanism created by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), through which developing countries that demonstrate they have reduced emissions of greenhouse gases from deforestation can obtain positive incentives or financial compensation. This concept was expanded to REDD+ to include: reducing emissions derived from deforestation and forest degradation; increasing forest carbon stocks; managing forests in a sustainable manner; and practicing forest conservation.

A Brief Summary of How REDD+ and Roundtables Work

	REDD+	Roundtables
Role of Government	Large	Small
Scale of Compliance	Nations/States/Projects	Farms/Estates/Mills ³
Mechanism	Public Policy/ Cap & Trade	Market Transformation
Finance	Emissions Offsets/ Public Finance/ Voluntary Carbon Market	Improved Market Access; Commodity-wide price increases ⁴

Initiatives & Standards Reviewed

REDD+

We review 3 REDD+ initiatives that have developed guidance on safeguards and 2 standards⁵ that are the most widely used or referenced for REDD+ projects and programs that are under development or implementation.⁶

1. UNFCCC—DURBAN PLATFORM FOR ENHANCED ACTION (COP17)

Under the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, parties agreed that developing countries taking part in REDD+ activities should periodically provide information (in their official communications to the UNFCCC governing body) on how social and environmental safeguards (as elaborated in the Cancun Agreements, adopted at COP16) are being addressed and respected. However, the Platform does not specify how often, the level of detail, or provide any additional guidance for reporting. Further information on safeguards under the UNFCCC is to be forthcoming at COP18.⁷

2. UN-REDD—THE UNITED NATIONS COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMME ON REDUCING EMISSIONS FROM DEFORESTATION & FOREST DEGRADATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The UN-REDD Programme relies on the convening power and technical expertise of 3 UN agencies (the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)) to assist developing countries prepare and implement national-level REDD+ strategies. Since its establishment in 2009, the UN-REDD Programme has received contributions totaling \$118M from 4 governments (Denmark, Japan, Spain, and Norway). Of these, \$42M

3 For Bonsucro and RSPO, certification occurs at the first collection point or at the mill level.

4 The roundtables were developed with the goal of “market transformation”, that is of eventually closing markets to all but certified supply chains. In this approach, the cost of higher social and environmental performance at the farm level is eventually incorporated into the price of the commodity. This contrasts with niche market certification that depends upon premiums and consumer choice.

5 Only one of these standards—CCBA—is a certification standard.

6 Numerous other guidelines and standards are under development, however we chose not to review them here because they are either still in a relatively early stage of development or they are more geographically limited in their scope than the 5 presented here.

7 The Durban decision mentions the possibility of using market-based approaches to support “results-based actions,” but does not specify whether all approaches currently under development (e.g., sub-national, bilateral) will be recognized, nor does it make any funds available to develop REDD+ programs.

have been disbursed to 13 of 42 member countries for readiness activities. (www.un-redd.org/)

3. FCPF—THE FOREST CARBON PARTNERSHIP FACILITY

The FCPF is a global partnership focused on assisting developing countries (including with financial support) in their efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conserve forest carbon stocks, and sustainably manage forests and enhance forest carbon stocks (REDD+). The FCPF Readiness Fund has \$230M in funds committed or pledged by 15 public donors. To date, \$139M have been allocated among 36 member nations, but very little of this funding has been dispersed. The FCPF Carbon Fund has been established with \$205M committed or pledged from 10 public and private donors. (www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/fcp/)

4. REDD+SES—REDD+ SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS INITIATIVE

The REDD+ SES initiative aims to build support for government-led REDD+ programs that make a significant contribution to human rights, poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation. It is the first standard to be specifically developed for assessing and certifying REDD+ projects and programs. REDD+SES has no fund attached to it; it is a standard only that can be used to establish the credibility of an independently established and funded project or program with respect to environmental and social responsibility. (www.redd-standards.org/)

5. CCBA—THE CLIMATE, COMMUNITY AND BIODIVERSITY ALLIANCE

A partnership of international NGOs and research institutes that has developed voluntary standards to help design and identify land management activities that simultaneously minimize climate change, support sustainable development and conserve biodiversity. CCBA is a standard only, to be used to establish the credibility of an independently established and funded project or program with respect to environmental and social responsibility. (www.climate-standards.org/)

Commodity Roundtables

We reviewed 3 major commodity certification processes, for palm oil, soybean, and sugar cane. Each of these roundtables has developed a set of principles and criteria that address land, soil, and water conservation as well as labor rights and practices and indigenous rights. Each standard has a deforestation cutoff date that prohibits or significantly restricts production on land cleared of forest after that date (2009 for soy, 2005 for palm oil, and 2008 for sugar cane). Given the scale of participation in the roundtables and the prohibition of planting on recently cleared lands, these certification systems have the potential to transform these international commodities to exclude deforesters and environmentally destructive producers from supply chains.



Palm oil: Agropalma, Thailandia (Brazil)
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1. RSPO – ROUNDTABLE ON SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL

The RSPO is a global multi-stakeholder organization and certification scheme for sustainable palm oil that was established in 2004. Its members represent 7 sectors of the palm oil industry—growers, processors & traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks & investors, environmental or nature conservation NGOs and social or developmental NGOs. As of March 2012, RSPO's 6 Mt of certified palm oil represent 10% of global annual production of this crop. (www.rspo.org/)

2. RTRS – ROUND TABLE ON RESPONSIBLE SOY

The RTRS, established in 2006, is a multi-stakeholder initiative which aims to facilitate a global dialogue on soy production that is economically viable, socially equitable and environmentally sound. As of 2011, the first 11 farms in Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina have been certified—currently representing 2% of global soy production. Its membership includes organizations and companies responsible for over 60% of world trade flows of soy, aiming to reach 5 million tons (10% of world production) of RTRS certified soy production by 2015. (www.responsiblesoy.org)

3. BONSUCCRO

Bonsucro is a global multi-stakeholder non-profit organization dedicated to improving the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of sugarcane production and downstream processing by promoting the use of a global metric standard. Just over 1.5% of the global land under sugarcane is now Bonsucro-certified, providing 1.5Mt of certified sugar and 1.2M m³ of certified ethanol to world markets. (www.bonsucro.com)

Results

Overall, we found a high degree of compatibility and potential synergy among the REDD+ and RT standards on several of the criteria (*Table 2*).

FORESTS.

The most important environmental criterion for both REDD+ performance and roundtable certification is deforestation. In REDD+, this is framed as reductions of carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. In roundtables, there are restrictions on the clearing of native forests (and native ecosystems generally) and of high conservation value forests

after hard cut-off dates. The combination of REDD+ and roundtables within the same nation or state/province could provide a very strong framework for reducing deforestation.

Comparing the standards on the forest criterion is also complicated for other reasons. For example, of the three commodities, palm oil is the only one requiring climate and other biophysical conditions identical to that of tropical rain forest. Soy and sugar cane suitability have partial overlap with tropical forest suitability. Thus, although our analysis indicates that all 3 commodity standards restrict forest clearing, RSPO was rated slightly lower, despite its geographical overlap with tropical rainforests, because it only restricts the clearing of primary forests (that have not been degraded by human activities, such as logging). In contrast, RTRS' principles and criteria are the most stringent, restricting clearing of all native forest, even if degraded or regenerating.



Cane cutter Brazil

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FREE, PRIOR & INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC).

FPIC requires that a local community give or withhold its consent to proposed projects that may affect their rights over natural resources and lands they customarily own, occupy or otherwise use. All of the standards we reviewed require some type of consultation with indigenous and traditional communities, but not necessarily FPIC. Three of the REDD+ standards (UN-REDD, CCBA, REDD+SES) and 2 of the roundtables (RSPO, Bonsucro) require full FPIC. The combination of REDD+ safeguards and roundtable standards could increase the likelihood that the principle of meaningful consultation is put into practice.

LAND RIGHTS & CONFLICT.

All of the standards we reviewed address land rights, but varied considerably in the details of their requirements related to: (1) proof of rights to own or use the land; and (2) absence of conflicts over the rights to own or use the land. The CCBA, REDD+SES, and all 3 roundtable standards have the most detailed and stringent guidelines, requiring explicit proof of the right to own or use land. The remaining initiatives provide more general guidance that emphasizes the need (and right) of nations to address land-tenure issues. This is perhaps not surprising, as RSPO was rated slightly lower, despite its geographical overlap with tropical rainforests, because it only restricts the clearing of primary forests (that have not been degraded by human activities, such as logging).

Conclusion

REDD+ safeguards (and goals) combined with roundtables principles and criteria are highly complementary. If linked, they could create jurisdiction-wide performance guidance that provides a broader context within which farm-level performance is achieved to meet roundtable standards. REDD+ could have a higher chance of success in combination with roundtable certification, and vice versa. **In one scenario, jurisdictions (nations, states) could implement REDD+ safeguards and support the jurisdiction-wide transition of farm sectors to performance levels required by the roundtables, achieving the dual benefits of REDD+ “pay-for-performance” compensation and greater access to commodity markets.**



Top | Manual cane cutting

Copyright: Solidaridad

Bottom | Machine harvesting sugarcane

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Table 2. Each of the 5 REDD+ standards and the 3 commodity roundtable standards are assessed with respect to the extent to which they provide clear and detailed guidance on each of 9 categories of criteria. The rating system and categories are defined below. More detailed information on each standard by category can be found in Annex A and in the complete spreadsheet at <http://www.ipam.org.br/ipam/social-and-environmental-safeguards-redd-and-commodity-roundtables>

	REDD+					Roundtables		
	UN-FCCC	UN-REDD	FCPF	CCBA	REDD+ SES	RSPO	RTRS	Bonsucro
GOVERNANCE								
Legal Compliance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Transparency	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Conflict & Grievance Resolution	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
SOCIAL								
FPIC	○	●	○	●	●	●	●	●
Land Use Rights	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Labor Rights	○	○	○	●	○	●	●	●
ENVIRONMENTAL								
Forest	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Biodiversity	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Soil & Water	○	●	○	●	○	●	●	●

LEGEND

- = extensive and/or restrictive guidelines
- = moderately restrictive guidelines
- = no or little guidance or requirements

Legal Compliance: The extent to which a standard requires adherence to laws, regulations, and other norms at any level (local, sub-national, national, international)

Transparency: The extent to which the standard has developed a set of policies, practices and procedures that allow stakeholders to have accessibility, usability, utility, understandability, informativeness, and auditability of information and process held by governments, corporations, organizations or other entities.

Conflict & Grievance Resolution: The extent to which formal policies and guidelines to resolve disputes or address complaints related to development or implementation of program or project activities have been developed.

Free, Prior & Informed Consent: The extent to which the standard requires that a local community give or withhold its consent to proposed projects that may affect their rights over natural resources and lands they customarily own, occupy or otherwise use.

Land Rights & Conflict: The extent to which restrictions on land that has contested land rights are included.

Labor Rights: The extent to which the standard requires adherence to legal and claimed human rights having to do with labor relations between workers and their employers, usually obtained under labor and employment law

Forests: The extent to which restricts forest clearing or degradation is restricted

Biodiversity: The extent to which measures to protect biodiversity, (including habitat and endangered or endemic species) are required

Soil & Water: The extent to which measures to conserve or improve soil and water resources are required

Annex A

Analysis by Criterion Category

GOVERNANCE

Legal Compliance

Compatibility

- UNFCCC requires REDD+ actions to be consistent with national laws and relevant international conventions and agreements
- UN-REDD supports the rule of law in which all persons are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated. It also pays attention to the interests of relevant stakeholders according to international obligations
- FCPF requires the legal assessments for the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) to respect national laws and policies, and international obligations
- CCBA and REDD+SES require compliance with all local and national laws, international treaties and conventions, and other instruments (e.g. contracts)
- The RTRS, RSPO, and Bonsucro require compliance with all local and national laws. RSPO and Bonsucro explicitly mention all ratified international conventions and specific areas of law, whereas RTRS makes reference to specific conventions (e.g., ILO Conventions on Forced Labor; agrochemicals listed in Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions are not used)

Divergence

- REDD+ guidelines generally require a broad compliance with the existing legal framework.
- In general, RTs principles and criteria are more explicit about legal compliance with laws and regulations related to agricultural production and processing (including labor, transportation, land-use, and agro-chemicals). For example, RSPO requires compliance with wildlife, environmental management and forestry laws. Bonsucro expressly requires compliance with land-tenure and labor rights



Transparency

Compatibility

- All REDD+ and RT standards require that a minimum amount of information regarding projects or programs (REDD+) or certified properties or industries (RTs) be made available to stakeholders, although the type and degree of information varies by standard

Conflict/Grievance Resolution

Compatibility

- UN-REDD, FCPF, REDD+SES, CCBA, RSPO, RTRS, and Bonsucro all require clear and transparent dispute and grievance resolution mechanisms

Divergence

- The UNFCCC, does not require a conflict and grievance resolution mechanism

SOCIAL

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

Compatibility

- All of the standards require indigenous and traditional community consultation, with variations
- The UN-REDD, CCBA, REDD+SES, RSPO, and Bonsucro require FPIC

Divergence

- The FCPC requires Free, Prior and Informed Consultation but does not require FPIC (the latter is a higher standard)
- The RTRS recognizes indigenous rights over lands, but only requires FPIC related to compensation for losses.

Land Rights and Conflict

Compatibility

- All of the standards address land rights, however they vary on the specificity of requirements related to: (1) proof of rights to own or use the land; and (2) absence of conflicts over the rights to own or use the land
- The UNFCCC is very general. It only requires non-Annex I countries to resolve land-tenure issues as they develop their REDD programs. This guidance is relatively vague considering the complexity of an in-depth analysis of items 1 and 2 above.
- The UN-REDD is also very general. It respects the land rights of indigenous people, local communities, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. In other words, it directs land conflicts with indigenous and local communities to be resolved. However, it is still very limited when considering the necessity of overall proof to use the land
- The FCPF requires countries seeking financing for readiness for REDD to assess their land use laws. The FCPF leaves land tenure issues as the country's responsibility. However, this can also be controversial if countries decide to overturn land rights of indigenous people and traditional communities
- The CCBA, REDD+SES, RSPO, RTRS, and Bonsucro explicitly require demonstrable proof of right to use the land

Divergence

- The UNFCCC, UN-REDD and FCPC are vague. There is no explicit directive stating that REDD+ activities should not take place on land where ownership is contested

- CCBA, REDD+SES, RSPO, RTRS, and Bonsucro are more specific as they require demonstration of the right to use the land
- The CCBA, REDD+SES, and RSPO also go further to explicitly require that the land use does not infringe upon others rights without FPIC
- The REDD+ SES, RSPO, and RTRS also require the existence of an agreement (with FPIC) for compensation due to loss of land use rights

Labor Rights and Practices

Compatibility

- Roundtables and CCBA address labor laws and regulations, including worker health, safety, and a clear process for handling grievances

Divergence

- Labor rights and practices are not explicitly addressed under most REDD+ standards and guidelines (except CCBA)
- Roundtable labor rights and practices guidelines are explicit and include: (i) freedom from discrimination; (ii) assured health and safety; (iii) guaranteed minimum wages; and (iv) imposed age limits for non-hazardous and hazardous activities



ENVIRONMENTAL

Forests

Compatibility

- All of the standards restrict deforestation to some extent, although they vary in their details
- By definition, REDD+ standards provide guidelines regarding the reduction of deforestation and forest degradation and restoration or regeneration of forests
- The UNFCCC requires developing countries to implement national forest reference levels, and a system of reporting and verification according to the convention guidelines
- The UN-REDD requires the development of National Forest Programmes, as well as requiring REDD+ activities to minimize impacts on forest carbon stocks
- The FCPF is more specific and requests the identification of land use trends and drivers, reference levels, monitoring capabilities, and measurements for deforestation, degradation and forest conservation
- The CCBA requires baselines using IPCC 2006 Guidelines for Agriculture, Forest, and other Land Use (AFOLU)⁸

8 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2006 Guidelines for National GHG Inventories for Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use Volume 4 Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use. <http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl/vol4.html>

- All 3 RTs have guidelines regarding the expansion of new croplands into forested areas, including non-certification of crop production on lands converted after a cut-off date of 2005 for RSPO, 2008 for Bonsucro, and 2009 for RTRS

Divergence

- The REDD+ mechanism is designed to compensate for the reduction of GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. REDD+ social and environmental standards are concerned with forest conservation, carbon stock enhancement, and maintaining biodiversity. Nonetheless, the implementation of REDD+ is still complex, and in some cases may allow for deforestation depending on the type of forest management adopted
- RTs have simple and clear cut-off dates from which forests cannot be converted into agricultural land in order to obtain RT certification. However, under the current criteria, some deforestation may still be allowed.
 - » RSPO applies the cut-off date only to primary forest and high conservation value areas (HCVAs), allowing for potential deforestation of secondary and degraded forests. The RSPO continues to reform its principles and criteria, however, and current discussions



propose to incorporate the end of development of new plantations on peat and high biomass landscapes. If approved, this will become effective in 2013

- » RTRS applies the cut-off date to native forests, unless approved under the RTRS map system (under development). While the map is being developed, no expansion on native forests is allowed
- » Bonsucro, applies the cut-off date to protected lands of critical biodiversity or HCVA categories 1-4, allowing for potential deforestation of primary, secondary, and degraded forests.

Biodiversity

Compatibility

- Generally, all REDD+ standards and guidelines and RTs principles and criteria have requirements related to HCVAs
 - » UNFCCC emphasize that REDD+ activities should incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services
 - » UN-REDD requires REDD+ actions to contribute to national biodiversity and to avoid or minimize the impacts of REDD+ activities on biodiversity and other ecosystem services

- » FCPF simply states that biodiversity is one of the multiple benefits of REDD+ activities
- » CCBA requires the identification of threatened or rare ecosystems and endemic species, in addition to HCVA
- » REDD+ SES requires REDD+ to maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services
- » RTRS requires protection of endangered or threatened species on the property, promotes the restoration of degraded native vegetation (thus restoring habitat), and prohibits conversion of high biodiversity lands
- » The RSPO does not certify agricultural practices that replaced primary forests after November 2005 on HCV land
- » Bonsucro does not allow expansion in protected areas, HCV land, or land with critical biodiversity after January 2008

Divergence

- Although they all address biodiversity, it is clear that the REDD+ approach is more general, whereas the RTs are much more specific on their conservation requirements. REDD+ activities are supposed to address many different drivers of deforestation, while the RTs are specific to the production of commodities. Nonetheless, REDD+ environmental safeguards can be improved to protect biodiversity and endangered species located in areas where REDD+ actions are taking place.
- In addition, the RTs have explicit requirements regarding use and handling of agrochemicals and agrochemical wastes to avoid environmental damage

Soil and Water Conservation

Compatibility

- The UNFCCC and REDD+ SES do not mention soil and water conservation
- The UN-REDD states that REDD+ activities should maintain and enhance the forest's multiple functions of biodiversity conservation, and provision of ecosystem services and natural resources. Soil formation and water quality are considered ecosystem services that are part of the multiple functions of forests. UN-REDD also lists soil and water as natural resources
- FCPF requires the identification of perverse synergies that cause soil degradation. It also states that soil conservation and water regulation should be considered potential benefits of REDD+
- The CCBA links soil, water, and water protection to social wellbeing. This is because REDD+ projects can bring sustainable livelihood to local people through diversification of agriculture, as well as soil and water protection
- Although general REDD+ standards and guidelines do not explicitly address soil conservation, forest maintenance and restoration generally have a positive effect on soil resources (Stickler et al., 2009)
- The RTs have advanced requirements to implement management plans regarding soil conservation, including strategies to avoid/minimize erosion and enhance soil restoration, as well as water management strategies

Divergence

- The REDD+ reference to soil and water conservation is very superficial. On the other hand, RTs include explicit guidelines regarding the management of soil (eg., Bonsucro minimized tilling practices) and water resources (e.g., RTRS riparian habitat restoration practices and Bonsucro limitations on water consumption per product/Kg produced)

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